

English Tourism Week shines a light on cruise passengers choosing to stay local

Figures released from Portsmouth International Port have revealed 62% of cruise passengers who called into the city in 2024 chose to stay local. A total of 29,480 cruise passengers visited Portsmouth as part of a cruise itinerary last year, with over half deciding to stay in the city during their visit as part of organised shore excursions or to explore on their own using the port's complimentary shuttle service.

Portsmouth's visitor sector has been highlighted as a vital industry during English Tourism Week (14 - 23 March). At a kick off event hosted at Portsmouth International Port on Monday (14 March), it was revealed that tourism alone supports 12,589 jobs in the city, making it a key contributor to Portsmouth's economy.

The event led by Visit Portsmouth, saw stakeholders and representatives from attractions across the city come together to share stats and knowledge. The growth in the number of cruise calls over recent years was recognised as a substantial boost for local tourism.

Andrew Williamson, head of cruise and ferry at Portsmouth International Port said: "Portsmouth's location on the south coast is a gateway to main shipping channels and, paired with direct motorway access, makes us the ideal port for guests to set sail for destinations as far as the Caribbean and beyond. Our regular cruise customers (Saga, Fred Olsen, Virgin Voyages) run itineraries across Europe, while ferry services from Brittany Ferries and DFDS offer a direct route to northern France, Spain and the Channel Islands.

The increase in cruise and ferry customers also directly benefits local tourism, with passengers spending money in the city pre and post stay. Transit calls, where Portsmouth is a stop off destination on cruise itineraries, bring substantial spend to the city as guests choose to stay local and visit the many brilliant attractions direct on our doorstep."

Speaking at the event, Neil Chapman managing director at Hovertravel, shared their experience of working with cruise:

Neil Chapman said: "Hovertravel's partnership with Portsmouth International Port to offer cruise passengers a truly unique experience during their visit has added to Portsmouth's portfolio of world class attractions. As the world's favourite passenger hovercraft service, we provide an exciting and seamless way to explore the region.

Our flight experience excursions, running both morning and afternoon, bring groups in volume while delivering an exclusive opportunity to meet our pilots, learn about the technology behind the hovercraft, and ask them questions about this incredible mode of transport. This partnership allows us to showcase the innovation and excitement of our service to a market that seeks distinctive and memorable experiences at every port of call."

The port also works closely with Shaping Portsmouth who run a cruise passenger programme, with volunteers meeting and greeting passengers on the quayside. Experts in the local area, they provide guests with a personalised experience and help them to plan their day in Portsmouth, while promoting local museums and destinations. Last year volunteers greeted over 33,000 guests, with numbers due to increase in 2025 with a higher number of inbound tourism calls.